Zoot Suit Worksheet

1. Describe the *stasis* in the play: where, when, who, what, etc. in a paragraph.

The play takes place in Los Angeles, California during the 1940s during World War II. Henry and his “gang” are facing murder charges for the murder of a Mexican-American male that took place in Sleepy Lagoon. This sparks racial tensions, along with the wearing of the Zoot Suit.

2. What is the *intrusion*?

When El Pachuco appears on the stage and explains what is actually happening in the town and what the racial tensions actually mean.

3. What is the *unique factor*?

The unique factor is that this is the time that the Zoot Suit became popular and the Sleepy Lagoon Case happened causing the riots.

4. What is the *dramatic question* that should be answered by the end of the play?

Will the boys be released from prison? Will the riots create an even larger divide? Will Henry go to the military?

5. Identify the most *theatrical moment* in the play and of what importance it seems to be.

The court case really caught my attention because of the strong communication, or lack thereof, the judge was obviously already making her decision before the case was over. You could see the racial tension and profiling.

6. List some of the *themes* of the play.

Race, family/friends, gang affiliation, justice

7. What does Henry want? How does the playwright resolve his wants at the end of the play? How does this resolution compare with the real Henry, as indicated in the documentary?

Henry wants justice, but is well aware of how the justice system sees the case. He wants to be treated equally and the ability to be himself. He also wants to join the military and make his family proud. The playwright purposely made Henry have many obstacles, some in which were resolved and some in which weren’t. He never went to the military, he did wear a Zoot Suit when released from prison, and his family was proud of him regardless of his past.

8. Note which version of the play in production you saw (either the DVD version or the HS stage version), then discuss the way the designers move from place to place (scene to scene) and how effectively that is for communicating the dramatic action.

I saw the HS production of the play and the way the designers set the scene was quite amusing. They took full advantage of the non changing aspects of the set and added set pieces throughout the changing of scenes. They also used lighting and sound to direct your attention to certain places at certain times.

9. Choose a character from the play and discuss how the costume designer has accentuated (focused) the audience attention on that character. What are some of the details of the costume that strike you as interesting or exaggerated.

My choice is probably a little less important, but I noticed the way she was dressed for some reason. I focused on Alice, the reporter, her dress was true to the time. A reporter would have worn the pants with the suspenders, but I thought it was interesting how she was not perceived as a pretty girl until the end. She kept the same costume throughout the production until the last scene. I think this was to show that the boys had just been released so she had been too.

10. Lighting plays a big role in the DVD and the staged version by the HS. Discuss the use of light to accentuate characters and scenes, choosing a particular scene from the production to discuss.

The fading effect was used quite often in this play, as well as isolation. Its is used to single out an important aspect of a scene and make sure the audience isn’t distracted. Lighting was especially important when the letters were being read between Alice and Henry so we understood what was actually happening.